

REMARKS

By this Office Action, the Examiner has required restriction to one of the following inventions under 35 U.S.C. §121:

- I. Claims 29-33, in so far as they are drawn to oligonucleotides of murine OB-R splice variants, class 536, subclass 24.31.
- II. Claims 67-73, drawn to a method for diagnosing body weight abnormalities comprising detecting splice variants of OB-R using oligonucleotides or measuring splice variants of OB-R in a patient sample using oligonucleotides, classified in class 435, subclass 6.

Responsive to the Requirement for restriction, Applicants elect to prosecute the invention of Group I, with traverse, Claims 29-33, which are drawn to oligonucleotides of murine splice variants. By this Office Action, the Examiner further requires that Applicants elect a single nucleic acid sequence encoding a leptin receptor consisting of: SEQ ID NOS:2, 4, 6, 8, 10-15, 86-126. With respect to Group I, Applicants elect oligonucleotides hybridizable to the nucleic acid molecule which codes on expression a polypeptide of a leptin receptor OB-Re (SEQ ID NO: 10).

Applicants respectfully request reconsideration of the Requirement for Restriction, or in the alternative, modification of the Restriction Requirement to allow prosecution of more than one group of Claims designated by the Examiner in the present Application, for the reasons provided as follows.

Under 35 U.S.C. §121 "two or more independent and distinct inventions ... in one Application may ... be restricted to one of the inventions." Inventions are "'independent'" if "there is no disclosed relationship between the two or more subjects disclosed" (MPEP 802.01). The term "'distinct'" means that "two or more subjects as disclosed are related ... but are capable of separate manufacture, use or sale as claimed, AND ARE PATENTABLE OVER EACH OTHER" (MPEP 802.01) (emphasis in original). However, even with patentably distinct inventions, restriction is not required unless one of the following reasons appear (MPEP 808.02):

1. Separate classification

2. Separate status in the art; or
3. Different field of search.

Further, under Patent Office Examining Procedures, "[i]f the Search and Examination of an entire Application can be made without serious burden, the Examiner must examine it on the merits, even though it includes claims to distinct or independent inventions" (MPEP 803, Rev. 8, May 1988) (emphasis added).

Applicants respectfully submit that the groups designated by the Examiner fail to define compositions and methods, with properties so distinct as to warrant separate Examination and Search. In particular, as a species election has now been required, Claims 29-33 of Group I are drawn to oligonucleotides hybridizing to a nucleic acid encoding a specific receptor species that are fundamentally related to Claims 67-73 of Group II, drawn to methods for diagnosing body weight abnormalities comprising detecting said OB-receptor species using these oligonucleotides. Given the species election requirement, the search for any of the methods separately classified by the Examiner as the invention of Group II (which utilizes the oligonucleotides of Group I) would require an additional search of the **identical** classes wherein the oligonucleotides of Group I are classified, thus resulting in a duplicate search for the same material. Thus, Applicants submit that the Search and Examination of the entire Application, or, at least, of Group I with Group II can be made without serious burden, and therefore request that the Examiner examine all of the claims of the Application on the merits.

The Examiner's assertions to the contrary notwithstanding, Applicants respectfully submit that conjoint examination and inclusion of all of the Claims of the present Application would not present an undue burden on the Examiner, and accordingly, withdrawal of the Requirement for Restriction, or, at the least, modification to include the Claims drawn to Group I and Group II is in order.

No fees are believed to be further necessitated by the foregoing response. However, should this be erroneous, authorization is hereby give to charge Deposit Account No. 11-1153 for any underpayment, or credit any overages.

In view of the above, withdrawal of the Requirement for Restriction is requested,
and an early action on the merits of the Claims is courteously solicited.

Respectfully submitted,


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